



THE INTERVIEW

TIPS

DO

- Rehearse
- Go alone
- Arrive on time
- Listen attentively
- Speak clearly and distinctly
- Respond to questions with brief and direct answers
- Be honest

DON'T

- Be defensive, apologetic or desperate
- Ramble or give lengthy answers
- Complain about present or former jobs
- Be critical of others
- Chew gum or smoke

Have you been asked by an employer to come for an interview? Then all of the work you have put into preparing your resume and conducting your job search has been worth it.

The most important aspect of your job search is the interview? There are often several applicants for a position, and only a few are selected for an interview. The competition therefore is likely to be quite difficult. Being well prepared to sell your services and convince the employer that you're the person for the job is critical.

You will have two main purposes when you go for your interview

- Convince the employer that you can do the job
- Gather information about the position, and responsibilities, as well as the company

The interview is crucial to whether or not you get the job. Don't be discouraged. If you are adequately prepared you will feel confident to do your best. Remember that you are qualified for the job or the employer would not have contacted you. The next section of this booklet will give you ideas for how you can prepare yourself for your interview.

Job opportunities are either won or lost in the interview. The most qualified person isn't always the one who gets the job offer but usually the person who makes the best presentation of their qualifications.

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

You have presented all of your information in your resume, covering letter, and application form. Why do you need to prepare for the interview?

- Other applicants may have better qualifications than you therefore; your interview will give you an equal chance at getting the job.
- In the eyes of the employer the interview is the real test.
- Employers use the interview to check information given in the resume and application form.

Research the position

Find out as much as possible about the position. Speak to others about what the job may entail. Contact people you know who may be working in a similar position and ask them questions. For example:

- What kinds of skills are required?
- What kinds of tasks and activities are involved?
- What are the hours of work?
- How will I be expected to dress?
- What are the expectations?

Research the Company or Organization

Learn as much as you can about the company or organization. If you are being interviewed for work at a business or industry, you want to know the following: the company's products, its services, plant locations or branch offices, ownership and marketing. Your local library often has a directory that has information on various businesses. If you know anyone who works for the company, call them. Ask for any pamphlets or written materials that are available.

Prepare Possible Questions

Think about possible questions the interviewer may ask you. Anticipate some questions you might find difficult to answer. Then decide how you would answer so that you are prepared.

Possible Interview Questions

Listed below are samples of some of the questions you might be asked on an interview. Included are possible answers. Remember writing out and practicing your responses will help you prepare.

Q. *Tell me about yourself?*

A. Take this opportunity to sell your skills and abilities. Keep your examples to things work related. They are not interested in your personal life or recreational activities.

Q. *What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?*

A. Emphasize your positive attributes for example your skills, reliability, experience, and enthusiasm that will relate to work. Do not point to weaknesses you have that may be important to the position.

Q. *What words would you use to best describe yourself?*

A. Select words that describe positive aspects about yourself.

Q. *Have you been employed in this type of work before?*

A. Never say no. The employer is trying to find out if you can learn to do the job within a reasonable amount of time. Focus on skills that are transferable, and can be applied at work.

Q. *What is your reason for wanting to work here?*

A. The interviewer wants to determine if you will be satisfied in this job and are likely to stay. They will be able to tell if you know anything about the company. This may be what separates you from other candidates who may not have done their research.

Q. *Why did you leave your last job or are leaving your present one?*

A. The interviewer wants to know if you had difficulties with your past or present employer that may arise with them. Say positive things about your employment even if it had or has many downsides.

Q. *How often were you absent from your previous job?*

A. This will determine if you are reliable. If you were frequently absent due to illness or personal reasons, reassure the employer that you are dependable.

Q. What are your salary expectations?

A. The interviewer wants to know if your salary expectations are too high. If the interviewer insists on an answer, provide a range rather than a specific number.

Q. For what reason should we hire you instead of someone else?

A. List your skills and positive characteristics. If you hesitate and cannot think of more than one or two things, the interviewer will think that the reasons are not obvious or sufficient.

Q. How well do you work under pressure?

A. Be reassuring by giving examples of paid or unpaid activities that you have completed while under a deadline or pressure.

Q. Do you enjoy working with others?

A. Emphasize the advantages of working in a group indicating that various individuals complement one another in completing a certain task. Provide specific examples of your personal experiences in a group.

You may wish to prepare a list of questions you would like to ask about the position. For example:

- What will be expected of me?
- Is there a job description?
- What are the working hours?

Review Your Background

Review your resume and think about your history. Summarize your skills and your strengths. Inventory your background so that you can express yourself in a well-organized manner during the interview.

Rehearse

A practice interview ahead of time is a good idea.

Ask a friend or family member to rehearse the interview with you. Select a number of questions and practice responding to them.

Practice being at ease while talking about yourself.

Prepare Yourself

Now that you researched the job and the company, thought about the interview questions, reviewed your background, and rehearsed, it's time to attend your interview. The following are things you can do to make sure you are at your best.

- To be fresh and alert get a good night's rest the night before.
- Think about your appearance. You want to be dressed appropriately. In most cases, that means wearing what you would if you were on the job. As always appearance continues to be important in most interview situations.
- Check the time of your appointment and write down the correct address. Be sure to know the name of the person you are going to see.
- Double check that you have everything you need for the interview including - two copies of your resume, a list of references, a pen and a note pad. If you have a portfolio of your work, take it along too. Do not take anything you do not need.

The Interview

If you have properly prepared yourself, you should be relaxed and confident during your interview.

The following are a few guidelines to assist you on the interview day:

- Go alone
- Arrive early - ten to fifteen minutes is a good guide. This will give you time to sit down, relax and collect your thoughts.
- Smile and shake hands firmly with the employer. Greet the interviewer formally by name if you know it. Stand until you are offered a seat.
- Sit up straight, look poised and alert.
- Listen carefully to the questions you are asked and think about the answers. Ask for clarification if you are not sure of the question.
- Respond to questions with brief and direct answers. Be specific and keep to the point. Don't ramble on or tell stories.
- Speak clearly and distinctly. Watch your grammar. Avoid slang words.
- Do not chew gum.

- Be positive. Emphasize what you can do, not what you can't. Don't complain about your present or former jobs. Don't be critical.
- Be sure to ask questions about the job.
- When the interview seems to be coming to an end, summarize your interest in the job and stop talking.
- Thank the employer for their time and interest when the interview is over.

The Follow-up

Your interview is over but your work is not! You still have a few things to do. There are certain things you should now do.

1. Write comments in a journal or notebook right after your interview is completed. Include the following:
 - *The name of the interviewer, their title and address.
 - *Important information that may assist you if a second interview with the company is required.
 - *Record all of the questions you were asked that you recall.
 - *Any other job leads or network leads the interviewer provided you with.
2. To learn from your interview and to better prepare for your next one complete the interview evaluation checklist included in this publication. Think of what was positive. What could be improved?
3. Using the same general format as with your cover letter, write a thank-you note recapping your skills.
4. Follow-up with a phone call if you have not heard from the interviewer after a week.
5. Be prepared for rejection. If you have been notified that you have not received the position, ask why you were not successful. If you were not qualified, ask if there are positions with the company for which you are qualified.
6. Do not sound bitter by becoming defensive. You never know if the person the company just hired will work out. Keep communication open to better your chances for future positions.

INTERVIEW EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Copy this form to help you analyze how well your interview went. This will help you to improve your interview style and assist you in getting ready for your next one.

1. Did I have the necessary materials with me?
 - a. Pen and Paper Yes___ No___
 - b. Resume, documents, portfolio or work samples, reference letters or lists of references? Yes___ No___
2. Did I arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the interview was scheduled to begin? Yes___ No___
3. Was I respectful and courteous to everyone I met? Yes___ No___
4. Did I know and use the interviewer's name correctly? Yes___ No___
5. Did I give positive signals about my interest in the position? Yes___ No___
 - a. Did I show interest, eagerness, and enthusiasm by sitting up and leaning forward? Yes___ No___
 - b. Did I speak clearly and confidently? Was my tone pleasant? Yes___ No___
 - c. Did I make eye contact with the interviewer when I spoke and when I was being spoken to? Yes___ No___
 - d. Was I fidgeting, appearing to be nervous? Yes___ No___
 - e. Did I show that I was listening by answering questions that were asked? Yes___ No___
 - f. Did I control my annoyance when dealing with irrelevant questions or interruptions? Yes___ No___

6. Did I demonstrate my qualifications in the following areas:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| a) Educational Background | Yes__ No__ |
| b) Work Experience | Yes__ No__ |
| c) Accomplishments | Yes__ No__ |
| d) Career Plans and Goals | Yes__ No__ |
| e) Knowledge of the company | Yes__ No__ |
| f) Knowledge of the job in questions | Yes__ No__ |
| g) Self-management skills | Yes__ No__ |
| h) Transferable skills | Yes__ No__ |
| i) Technical skills | Yes__ No__ |

7. Did I answer all questions honestly? Yes__ No__

8. Was I successful in convincing the interviewer that I was qualified for the position? Yes__ No__

9. Did I ask relevant questions? Yes__ No__

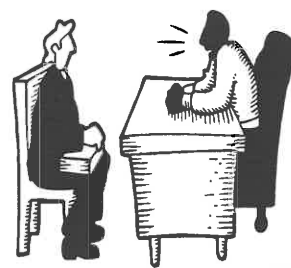
10. Which questions did I have the most difficulty answering?

11. What were my greatest strengths in the interview?

12. My overall performance was?

Poor__ Adequate__ Good__ Excellent__

13. Where could I have improved?



THE INTERVIEW

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Being truly prepared for an interview is important. Below is a list of typical interview questions. In the space provided, answer each question.

1. Describe your qualities and talents that would help you in this job.

2. Why are you interested in this position? _____

3. What are your greatest strengths? _____

4. What are some areas you see yourself wanting to improve? _____

5. Give me an example of one of your greatest accomplishments to date.

6. Tell me about your grades. _____

7. What were your most rewarding experiences in school? _____

8. Describe a time you worked on a project as a team member and what you contributed. _____

9. Tell me about a goal you had set and how you went about reaching it.

10. If you had a difficult decision to make, how do you go about making it?

11. What are your hobbies and outside interests? _____

12. What do you see yourself doing in the next five years? _____

13. Is there anything you would like to tell about yourself that hasn't been asked in the interview? _____

14. Do you have any questions? _____

